

CEANOTHUS - A NICE CUP OF TEA & A PIECE OF AGUE CAKE

Imagine, in the light of the full moon, December 1773, Boston Harbour and a jubilant mood amongst the crowd as hundreds of chests of tea were thrown off the British ships into the sea (the Boston Tea Party). But next morning, when the party was over they were left wondering what would take the place of their beloved Bohea Tea. Forsaking the comfort of a nice cup of tea was going to be difficult. Various enthusiastic experiments led to the use of *Ceanothus americanus* as an acceptable substitute, and it was just one of many Liberty Teas of the time. Hence one of its common names being New Jersey Tea. It is also referred to as Red Root Bush - more of that later. Whether or not it really did provide the soothing and refreshing qualities that *Camellia sinensis* did would be interesting to discover as part of *Ceanothus*' homeopathic picture is that of soothing a state of great agitation - again, more of that later.

Often thought of as an 'organ support' remedy, *Ceanothus* is well known for its affinity to the spleen and symptoms arising from an enlarged spleen and because of this it is regarded as a left sided remedy. The spleen is an organ lying within the abdominal cavity, situated under the margin of the ribs on the left side. It resembles a large lymph gland in structure and is a vascular organ having a large arterial blood supply. On entering the spleen the blood flow slows greatly as it enters a meshwork of dilated blood vessels. These lie between large masses of lymphocytes (circulating white blood cells). Their walls contain phagocytes which are capable of engulfing certain cells and foreign particles in the

blood and removing them from the circulation The relatively large amount of arterial blood which enters the spleen leaves via the splenic vein and passes to the liver via the portal vein - here you might then have a situation of symptoms which go from left to right and back to left again. The spleen plays an important part in the production of antibodies as well as removing abnormal or dying blood cells - so many blood disorders come under its range.

Enlargement of the spleen can go virtually unnoticed or misdiagnosed for a very long time. As it becomes bigger and bigger it presses on other organs around it thus causing further symptoms. Many infections such as infectious mononucleosis, viral and bacterial infections and inflammations cause the spleen to enlarge as well as parasites, liver diseases and tumours within the lymphatic system. Malaria is probably the most common parasitic condition which causes the spleen to swell. These parasites develop in the liver and multiply in red blood cells which cause them to rupture and the cycle continues. The spleen has to work extremely hard under these conditions. In contrast this might suggest a right to left action of a remedy.

'Ague cake' - that wonderful old medical term - is a form of enlargement of the spleen resulting from the action of malaria on the system. It suggests 'congealed' and 'moulded into a solid mass'. The spleen can enlarge so extremely it can reach upwards to the thoracic viscera and downwards to the navel causing agonising pain.

But there are other symptoms which are worth noting:-

pain is usually cutting and deep seated in nature, sometimes neuralgic

cannot lie on the left side because of the pain

very chilly - chills go down the back, face feels hot, generally hot after the chills

back and legs feel weak

bearing down sensations in the abdomen

right sided headaches (as if brain enlarged)

crackling noises in the head

the beat of the pulse is felt in the head

hair falls out

violent vertigo

mouth very dry and full of ulcers (can also have excessive saliva)

extremely visible heart beat

eyes feel large and dry

suppressed menses or too early and profuse (where fibroids might be present)

yellow leucorrhea

loss of appetite

desires sour things and water

constant urging to urinate

green urine

diarrhoea and dysentery

chronic bronchitis

asthma with dyspnoea

suffocation, has to fight for breath (entangled)

veins become knotty and painful

skin cancers

leukaemia

hodgkin's disease

cancer of the spleen

cancer of the pancreas

cancer of the liver

there is periodicity

general sleeplessness

dreams of snakes

<<< motion, left side, lying on left side, damp weather,

pastry, water

>>> warm weather

Compare:- china; arsenicum; lachesis; nat mur; carbo veg;
ippecac; merc; nat sulph; berberis; myrica; cedron; agaricus;
chel; ferrum mur; aconite; veratrum viride; ferrum phos;
tarax; nit-ac.

Historically it has been used as an astringent, expectorant, lymphagogue, stimulant, antiseptic and sedative and like any good cup of tea it will both soothe and revive!!

I would like to go back now to two earlier points which hint at the mental and emotional picture of Ceanothus.

Another name for Ceanothus, as mentioned earlier, is Red Root Bush. Not only does the 'red' suggest its affinity to the blood but that also it is the roots of the shrub which have been used historically by herbalists and they contain anticarcinogenics (the homeopathic preparation uses only the leaves). The roots are fractured, hard, tough and splintery. Roots of any shrub can grow to become entangled as they strive to access space and nutrients and it is this 'ENTANGLEMENT' which is at the essence of the mental and emotional symptom picture.

There us a great deal of nervous excitement, as if the nerves are shaken, a state of great agitation. They makes gestures as though trying to grasp something. There are many fears to do with their own state of ability. They fear they will be permanently disabled and will never get better. They have dreams of snakes which become entangled as they slither round and round their own body. They carry with them an uneasy foreboding and a great sense of melancholy, a fear that something will happen. There is violent vertigo with a great deal of shaking, as if they mean to become disentangled. The intestines feels as if they are in knots.

During fright and alarm reaction the spleen contracts and discharges stored blood which increases the volume of blood in the general circulation. Also red blood cell production accelerates and the ability of the blood to clot increases. These reactions combat bleeding. Therefore ailments from fright and haemorrhagic conditions are significant.

The oval shaped spleen is the largest mass of lymphatic tissue in the body - approximately 12cm long. The superior surface is smooth and convex and conforms to the concave surface of the diaphragm. Neighboring organs make indentations in the spleen - stomach, left colon, left kidney. Dense connective tissue and scattered smooth muscle fibres surround the spleen (ENTANGLED), this, in turn, is covered by a serous membrane. There is a TANGLED sensation in the left hypochondrium, with air hunger.

I have only ever used this remedy as an organ support and I would strongly urge you to read Eric Sommermann's case

which was printed in the Homeopath, vol. 13.2, 1994 - it is a fabulous write up.

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